Carbon Nullius and Racial Rule: Race, Nature and the Cultural Politics of Forest Carbon in Canada

Andrew Baldwin

Department of Geography, School of Environment and Development, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL, UK; andrew.baldwin-2@manchester.ac.uk

Abstract: Critical geographers have paid remarkably scant attention to issues of climate change, even less so to forest carbon management policy. Building on geographic debate concerning the ontological production of nature and race, this paper argues that at stake in the climate change debate are not simply questions of energy geopolitics or green production. Also at issue in the climate debate are powerful questions of identity, the national form and race. This paper considers how a particular slice of the climate debate – forest carbon management discourse pertaining to Canada's boreal forest – enacts a political geography of racial difference, one that seeks to accommodate an imagined mode of traditional aboriginal life to the exigencies of global climate change mitigation and, importantly, to a logic of global capital now well into its ecological phase.

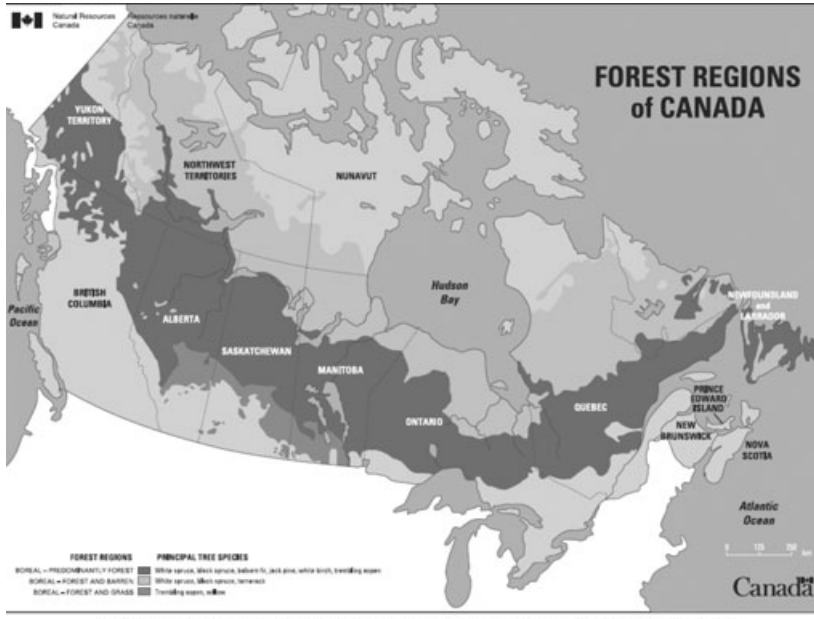
Keywords: race, nature, forest carbon management, boreal forest, aboriginal peoples

> Societies are most vulnerable at their edges, along the tattered fringes of the known world (Anne McClintock 1995, *Imperial Leather* p 24).
>
> The liminal figure helps to maintain societies (Edward Said 1994, *Culture and Imperialism* p 141).

In May 2007, some 1500 scientists from around the world issued a letter to the Government of Canada, urging it to do more to conserve the boreal forest of northern Canada (Figure 1). In November 2005 dozens of public demonstrations were staged in cities and towns across North America, calling on companies like Victoria's Secret Office Deport and Kimberly-Clark to ease their demand for forest products derived from the boreal forest. And in the summer of 2003 several Canadian celebrities embarked on a series of canoeing expeditions across the Canadian north, also with a view to garnering popular political support for boreal forest conservation. Each of these events, and numerous others besides, testify to a groundswell of political enthusiasm mobilized over the last decade to stem the pace of industrial development in Canada's boreal forest.

On the face of it, such messaging presents a familiar refrain. Forests—from Chiapas to Sarawak and all those between—are nature's emblem

Antipode Vol. 41 No. 2 2009 ISSN 0066-4812, pp 231–255
doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00671.x
© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode.*



Adapted from the Forest Regions of Canada map with permission of the Canadian Forest Service, Natural Resources Canada, 2005.

Figure 1: Canada's boreal forest. Courtesy of the National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy, Ottawa, Canada

par excellence, and are fast becoming a thing of the past; protect them, or face dire consequences. Indeed, at a moment of high environmental alert, when the coming century of global environmental change has been ominously dubbed an "age of consequences" (Campbell et al 2007), it is hardly surprising that forests—and now, as never before, the *boreal* forest—continue to occupy such a privileged position in the "global" environmental imaginary. Yet, for all its straightforward simplicity, such messaging seems almost destined to express a precarious relation to capital. On the one hand, collective efforts now afoot to conserve Canada's boreal forest appear to articulate an environmental politics opposed to capital. Companies directly targeted by the boreal forest campaign, companies like Victoria's Secret, would no doubt agree. But at the very moment these pronouncements work to oppose the logics of "extractive capital" (Luke 2003), they readily facilitate *other* logics of capital, those, for instance, that recode nature for export to the tourist market or, as will be the focus of this article, the global carbon market.

This insight will surely come as no surprise to regular readers of this journal; anyone even remotely familiar with the geographic literature on nature and capitalism will readily concede that such contradictory logics often mark the process by which nature is valorized (Escobar 1996; Harvey 1996; Heynen et al 2007; O'Connor 1994). So rather than dwell on this contradiction, I wish to take it in a slightly different direction

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode*.

by adding to it the slippery variable of "racialization", a variable inadequately accounted for in recent debates concerning neoliberalism, nature and environmental governance (cf Heynen et al 2007; McCarthy and Prudham 2004). That is, in this article, I show how processes of racialization are intimately tied to the valorization of nature under conditions of neoliberal environmentalism. More specifically, I show how two different modes of racialization can be found operating within the incipient discursive regime of boreal forest carbon management in Canada. The first is a recurring mode of racialization that some consider to be an essential, albeit deeply fraught, move in the production of wilderness: the erasure of human presence, especially but not exclusively aboriginal peoples (Braun 2002; Cronon 1996). The second is an historicist variation on David Theo Goldberg's notion of racial rule (Goldberg 2002). By reading racialization into the incipient discourse of boreal forest carbon management, I do not wish to suggest that these two modes of racialization represent a distinctive break from past modes of racialization in Canada, nor that they mark any decisive turning point in the distribution of racialized power in Canada. Rather, and if anything, I aim to show how the incipient discourse of forest carbon management in Canada performs these two already existing modes of racial domination, which are specific to Canada's colonial past and oft repeated in Canada's colonial present. However, at the risk of caricaturing racialization as a singular, omnipotent logic, I note later in the article the importance of understanding racialization as an irreducible, contradictory and messy phenomenon, violent and highly uneven in its effects, yet simultaneously, in some cases, the basis upon which essentialist notions of aboriginality are invoked by aboriginal peoples for political advantage (Barron 2000).

My argument is that the now almost ubiquitous framing of the boreal forest as a space of carbon (Bhatti et al 2003; Munro, 2008) not only deterritorializes the forest into the abstract regimes of global forest carbon management and capital. So too, and perhaps far less obviously, it operates as a disciplinary schema that consolidates a vague notion of "white" national subjectivity, while simultaneously either erasing aboriginality or enfolding flattened variations of aboriginality into its ordering logic. In this sense, I consider how a particular slice of the climate change debate—forest carbon management discourse pertaining to Canada's boreal forest—enacts a political geography of racial difference, one that accommodates various constructions of aboriginality (aboriginal as absence, tradition, and labour) to the exigencies of global climate change mitigation and, importantly, to a logic of global capital now well into its "ecological phase" (Escobar 1996). My contention here is that boreal forest carbon discourse commits a form of epistemic violence by foreclosing the radical heterogeneity that works beneath the universalizing category of aboriginality. As such,

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode.*

I wish to contend that at stake in the politics of climate change mitigation and adaptation in Canada, at least as it pertains to the boreal forest of northern Canada, is not simply the re-regulation of global capital toward some atmospherically benign end, nor is it simply the geopolitics of energy, nor competing modes of production, ecological or otherwise. Also at issue in the climate debate are very powerful, very subtle, although often and all too easily overlooked, questions of identity, the national form and "race".

Drawing attention to the racializing power at play within boreal forest carbon discourse in Canada raises some very pressing questions about the cultural politics of ecological modernity more broadly (Hajer 1996). Climate change discourse is permeated by incredibly powerful moral overtones, a moralism which finds perhaps its most striking expression where national and climate change discourses converge, most notably around questions of national (cf Campbell et al 2007) and energy (Stanislaw 2007) security. This is as much the case in Canada as elsewhere. What then does this moral imperative mean for the cultural politics of nature and race in the context of ecological modernity? Donald Moore, Jake Kosek and Anand Pandian have made the convincing point that "race and nature are constitutive features of modern power", "integral to the rule of modernity rather than an exception" (Moore, Kosek and Pandian 2003:15). However, if this is so (and I believe it is), then how might the cultural politics of "race" and nature be reinterpreted when modernity is characterized as "reflexive" or "ecological"? Does the moral imperative of ecological modernity, in particular climate change, authorize new forms of racial and epistemic violence? Or does it simply repeat older forms of colonial violence? Part of my argument in this article is that aboriginal peoples are very often (and all too easily) "slotted" into boreal forest carbon discourse through the frame of tradition (Braun 2002). But does such a narrow framing foreclose other possibilities for aboriginal agency and politics in the context of climate change and the biotic reconfigurations (of people, viruses and climatic conditions) that climate change implies? If so, what might this foreclosure mean for aboriginal peoples who actively struggle against tradition, or for those who strategically invoke the category of tradition in order to further whatever longer term political ambitions they might aspire to. Further, to the extent the carbon stored in Canada's boreal forest is valorized and exported to the global carbon market, is it possible that such a circumscribed notion of aboriginality is central to the process Bumpus and Liverman describe as "accumulation by decarbonization", a process whereby the production of surplus capital is sustained through the production and consumption of carbon offsets (Bumpus and Liverman forthcoming). And, indeed, if this is the case, to what extent can we say that the preservation of racial difference is central to the exercise of *ecologically* modern power, discourse and rule.

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode*.

By posing these questions, I wish to push beyond the rather stale but no less pressing climate change debate, polarized along the lines of what David Demeritt (1998) has dubbed "moral-liberal" believers and climate sceptics. Instead, I consider how climate change mitigation and adaptation might be understood as not merely techno-rational discourses concerned primarily with matters of carbon sequestration/storage, efficient production or "clean development" but as deeply racialized ones as well. My argument, however, is not that normative theories about the climate change mitigating effects of carbon storage must be dismissed on the grounds that they enable or necessarily perform a racist logic. Instead, I want to insist that we carefully attend to the extraordinary (and often unconsidered, unnoticed) capacity of racisms to attach to what are thought to be even the most progressive political agendas, including those that advocate the use of forest conservation in climate change mitigation and adaptation. This point is made all the more immediate since the political economy of forest carbon is now a firmly entrenched element in the global climate change negotiating agenda[1] as well as a standard feature of boreal forest discourse in Canada. Recognizing this disciplinary aspect of forest carbon management discourse is, thus, extremely important, since it has the power to effect profound material consequences (potentially both positive and negative) for First Nations peoples across Canada in both policy and practice.

The article begins with a short primer on the politics of forests, climate change and the Kyoto Protocol rules pertaining to forests. I then flesh out my argument by showing how racialization works through two different but related representations of forest carbon management discourse pertaining to Canada's boreal forest. The article concludes with some thoughts on the historical geographic contingency of carbon commodification and racialization.

Forests, Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol

Owing at least in part to the recent *Stern Review of the Economics of Climate Change*, which estimates that deforestation accounts for approximately 20% of global carbon emissions (Stern 2006), forests and forest management are currently enjoying renewed international policy attention for their carbon storage and climate change mitigating capacities.[2] Arguments about the incorporation of large-scale intact forests and forest management into climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, however, are not new. Such argumentation played a pivotal role in early round negotiations of the Kyoto Protocol, and culminated at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate 6th and 7th Conferences of the Parties in The Hague (2000) and Marrakech (2001), respectively. Despite a breakdown in negotiations at The Hague, negotiators eventually agreed to limit the role forests would play in any

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode.*

global climate change mitigating strategy, specifying that afforestation, reforestation and deforestation would comprise the principal forms of land use and land-use change by which forest carbon could be included in state carbon budgets. They also agreed that states could determine on an individual basis (by 2006) whether to include forest management activities in their carbon calculus. In spite of vigorously advocating that this provision be included in the Kyoto Protocol, Canada subsequently opted not to include forest management as a qualifying activity.

One of the numerous concerns environmental and conservation groups have with these provisions, however, is that they perversely incent land managers to convert existing "natural" forests into forest plantations. Here, a main argument against these provisions, at least from the point of view of the forest conservation community and a sizeable contingent of developing states, notably the Coalition for Rainforest Nations,[3] is that the current Kyoto Protocol rules do not adequately account for the carbon stored in so-called "natural" or "unmanaged" forests and peatlands. As result, so the argument goes, such spaces are inappropriately valued. It is furthermore argued that the Kyoto Protocol rules do not include provisions that allow states to compensate land and forest managers for reducing carbon emissions through avoided deforestation, reduced tillage and so on. It follows that if forest and peatlands carbon were more properly accounted for and if states were required to internalize these carbon values into land-use decisions *prior to* land-use allocations, then forests and peatlands would be of greater economic value if left in an intact, or "natural" state, then they if they were allocated for some other land use, such as plantation forestry. As such, numerous conservation groups worldwide are now working to ensure that the carbon stored in large, intact forests, including Canada's boreal forest but also forests across the developing world, is properly valued by land and forest managers.

The rationale behind this meta-project is twofold. First, internalizing forest carbon value is presented as just one of a number of instruments available to policymakers and firms seeking to reduce carbon emissions. By extension the instrument is said to guarantee at least a minimum of climatic stability. (Whether this is actually the case remains to be seen.) And second, it is hoped that forest carbon valuation will advance forest conservation through the provision of innovative conservation financing, which can be used to safeguard vast quantities of "wilderness" space and biodiversity, while at the same time benefiting local communities, such as First Nations communities, or forest concession holders. (In Canada some First Nations communities are also forest concessionaires.)

It bears mentioning that the most recent United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Chance Conference of the Parties held in Bali in December 2007 passed a decision that placed the issue of reduced emissions from deforestation in developing countries (also variously

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode*.

referred to as avoided deforestation, or avoided emissions) on the climate change negotiating agenda (UNFCCC 2007). Although the full implications of this decision cannot possibly be known at the time of writing, the decision nevertheless signals increasing policy convergence around the climate mitigating capacity of tropical forests in developing countries, as well as around the policy instrument of payments for forest carbon storage, which works to positively incent forest managers to conserve forests. Nor are the implications of this decision clear for Canada. While the decision applies to forests covered by the Clean Development Mechanism, ie forests in non-Annex I countries, efforts are most certainly underway in Canada to valorize boreal forest carbon for similar purposes.

Valuing Canada's Boreal Forest

It is within this political context, then, that the boreal forest of the Canadian north is now often represented for its carbon value.[4] The boreal forest has been central to the growth of market capitalism from at least the late seventeenth century. However, with the advent of the Kyoto Protocol, the boreal forest of northern Canada (as with forests around the world) is no longer prized exclusively for conventional natural resource values, such as timber, oil and gas and hydroelectric power. It is, instead, increasingly framed within a global political economy of carbon in which the potential exchange value of boreal forest carbon competes directly with these other forms of capital. The material implications of carbon valuation for the practice of neoliberalism in Canada and elsewhere are, however, anything but clear at this nascent stage in the development of the global carbon market. This uncertainty is compounded by the absence of a formalized forest carbon market in Canada (although recent legislation in the Province of Alberta will formalize carbon trading, including forest carbon, by March 2008), including any juridical-political specification on the distribution of carbon ownership rights. Even more immediately, this uncertainty is compounded by a dominant state logic that privileges the extraction of conventional natural resource values, such as oil and gas and mining. What this means is that the actual commercialization of forest carbon in Canada is still some way off. But if recent valuations of boreal forest carbon offer any indication of things to come, the globalized trade in "fixed" carbon (carbon stored in trees, peat or soil) has tremendous potential to significantly reshape the geographies of global capitalism. A recent report issued by the Canadian Boreal Initiative (2005),[5] for instance, estimated the value of carbon stored in Canada's boreal forest at $3.7 trillion. The same report compares the value of ecosystem services (clean air, water, biodiversity) provided by the boreal forest—$93.2 billion (2002)—to the annual benefits derived from

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode.*

conventional extractive industries (forestry, mining, hydroelectric)—$37.8 billion (2002)—in order to the make the claim that the boreal forest is economically (and thus socially) more valuable "intact" than allocated for conventional resource extraction.

Of course, there are significant problems with revaluing the boreal forest in such a manner. Not least, it is one thing to estimate the value of boreal forest carbon (and other ecosystem services), and quite another for these values to be realized through actual market transactions and contractual agreements. But regardless, the argument advanced in this document contains a very seductive logic. Consistent with ecological modernization theory, it says that environmental despoliation is the inevitable result of market failure, which can be reversed by simply constituting ecologically responsive markets. In the boreal forest case, such a reversal would entail internalizing carbon value into the costs of forest management in order to generate a "truer" reflection of the overall market value of the forest. According to this logic, the forest would be seen to have more economic value if left "intact" than if it were converted to some other value. The implication here is that ameliorating the negative environmental consequences of carbon-based capitalism is not inconsistent with capitalism itself. But instead offers the promise of a new round of accumulation in a more ecologically sensitive fashion. (The incipient global trade in certified emissions credits, carbon offsets and forest certification offer good examples of market mechanisms constituted by this reformist logic.) There is nothing new about this formulation. Such win–win logic is a standard refrain in ecological modernization theory, and has been promulgated by voices across the political spectrum in both its "strong" and "weak" variants (Desfor and Keil 2004).[6]

Critical geographers would be wise, however, to approach this logic with a certain amount of scepticism. Why? As recent critiques of the global carbon market caution, the burgeoning carbon market bears the unmistakable marks of colonial power (Bachram 2004; Robbins forthcoming). The main thrust of these interventions, while varied in both tone and form, is that global emissions trading and carbon offsets rely on a form of sovereign colonial power—"carbon colonialism"—that disproportionately favours states and multinational corporations over local actors. Bachram (2004), for instance, argues that the global emissions trading system is poorly monitored, contains a built-in incentive for fraudulent emissions reductions claims, and results in land-use activities, such as plantation forestry, that appear to generate environmental benefits, while in actual fact are gross examples of environmental injustice. Paul Robbins makes similar use of the idea of carbon colonialism. However, Robbins emphasizes the way forest carbon management displaces local use value in favour of global exchange value. His point is that even in cases where local

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode*.

forest managers, including community forest management authorities, might benefit from global carbon markets, through direct payments for reduced harvesting for instance, such managers are embedded within a global division of labour characterized by vast asymmetries in political economic power, thus placing local forest managers at a distinct disadvantage vis-à-vis other more powerful actors in the carbon market. It is important to recognize that neither writer dismisses the severity of climate change, nor the need for policies that reverse the anthropogenic release of carbon into the atmosphere. Rather each focuses on the institutional deficiencies of global carbon management from the point of view of a neo-colonial materialist critique. Moreover, each proposes that effective strategies for mitigating climate change must begin by recognizing these deficiencies. Similar concerns have also been registered by the social justice (Lohman 2006) and indigenous rights communities (Griffiths 2007).

Such critiques are an important means for denaturalizing capitalism and for questioning the market logic that pervades climate change policy. On their own, however, they tend to reify the problem of climate change as a purely technical and material one that demands the right mix of purely technical solutions. They also rely on a form of materialist critique in which it is argued that colonial subordination, exercised across the (post)colonial north–south divide, is maintained through the hegemony of economic neoliberalism. But does such a materialist rendering occlude other modes of (post)colonial critique? Or, indeed, does it blind us from seeing how neoliberalism is irretrievably caught up in other modes of (post)colonial domination? Does it risk forgetting, as Edward Said put it, that "imperialism . . . lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general *cultural sphere* as well as in specific political, ideological, economic and social practices" (1994:9, my emphasis). My hunch is that it does. This is not, of course, to deny that colonial power operates through coercive means. But neither do I insist that colonial power is purely representational. Representations of nature effect biophysical environments in all manner of ways. I do, however, wish to argue that the materialist critiques typified by Bachram and Robbins tend to downplay the complex technological work that climate change discourses play in the social construction of nature, space and identity. In light of this, I argue that boreal forest carbon management discourse in Canada enacts a hierarchy of racial difference, which regulates how specific subjectivities might be occupied within the very terms the discourse produces. Against the backdrop of a burgeoning political economy of carbon, this article, therefore, attempts to trace the *cultural valences* of forest-carbon management discourse in Canada. In particular, I want to consider how the constitutive silences and racialized character of a specific form of "white" Canadian identity are reproduced within boreal forest carbon management discourse, and show how this

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode.*

More forests.
More stored carbon.
More clean air.
Premier McGuinty,
will you keep your promise?
Protect our Boreal Forest.
A TRANSFORMATION in our Boreal Forest would mitigate global warming and prevent the extinction of woodland caribou and other threatened species. And it would position Ontario's forest industry to capture the rapidly growing market of green forest products.
Ontario's Boreal Forest is one of the largest remaining intact ecosystems in the world. It is home to a vast array of rare and threatened wildlife and clean sources of water. It also stores a tremendous amount of carbon in its trees, soil and peatlands. Studies indicate that intact Boreal Forests, when left undisturbed, store up to fifty percent more carbon than even the best-managed forests.
Preserving large intact areas of Ontario's Boreal has the potential benefit of preserving species and offsetting the damaging effects of global warming.
But the Ontario government needs to act now to take advantage of this unprecedented opportunity.
Show the world just how green Ontario can be. From books to lumber to office paper, let's build a reputation for environmental products from Ontario. Keep your promise. Protect Ontario's Boreal Forest.
Sincerely,
Margaret Atwood
Robert Bateman
Edward Burtynsky
Ken Danby
Jian Ghomeshi
Graeme Gibson
Barbara Gowdy
Sarah Harmer
Cathy Jones
Thomas King
Yann Martel
Robert Munsch
James Raffan
Clayton Ruby
Dr. David Suzuki

Figure 2: *Globe and Mail* advertisement, January 2007. Reprinted with permission

discourse works as a disciplinary schema that resembles a form of what critical race scholar David Theo Goldberg refers to as racial rule (2002).

Carbon nullius

Let me begin, then, by considering a recent advertisement placed in the *Globe and Mail* by an assortment of North American conservation groups[7] (Figure 2). Set against the image of a caribou head,[8] the ad calls on Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty to "protect our boreal forest" on the grounds that doing so will ensure "more forests", "more stored carbon" and "more clean air". It notes that "preserving large intact areas of Ontario's boreal" forest will potentially offset the effects of global warming through enhanced carbon storage and preserve threatened species and could help forest companies capture the benefits of a growing market for "green forest products". Along one side of the ad are the undersigned who endorse the plea, a list that includes numerous well-known Canadian celebrities. Importantly, the ad appeared in an

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode*.

issue of the *Globe and Mail* dedicated to climate change at a time in early 2007 when environmental concerns, in particular climate change, had eclipsed state-funded public health care as the most important issue on the national political agenda. It is also consistent with a prevailing tendency among Canadian conservation groups to construct the social meaning of Canada's boreal forest through a national rhetoric. (United States-based conservation groups tend to represent the boreal forest as a North American phenomenon as opposed to a Canadian one.) Further, its positioning in the *Globe and Mail* was a tactical manoeuvre. According to one activist, the ad was intended to pressure Premier McGuinty to follow through on a personal promise he had made to a small group of conservation groups in March 2003 while he was still Leader of the Opposition. McGuity's Liberal Party eventually came to power in October 2003. The promise entailed among other things a commitment to "institute meaningful, broad-scale land-use planning for Ontario's Northern Boreal Forest before any new major development, including ensuring full participation by native communities". The promise makes no reference to the conservation of forest carbon.

At first glance, this ad seems entirely unobjectionable, and, indeed, given the gravity of the climate change problematic, is just the sort of articulation one might expect from a contemporary environmental politics. It reminds us that forests occupy an important niche in the global carbon cycle by storing and sequestering carbon through photosynthesis. And it urges us to act now to ensure that forests continue to carry out this niche function. The planet will benefit. Woodland caribou will benefit. And perhaps most of all Ontario's forest sector will benefit through the steady provision of environmentally sensitive forest products to the green marketplace. Importantly, however, this ad excludes any mention of the numerous aboriginal reserve communities situated throughout the boreal space,[9] a deeply chilling silence given that the area in question is home to between 23 and 46 aboriginal communities with an estimated population between 18,750 and 35,500.[10] This silence is especially deafening if one considers that the biological and carbon content of the boreal forest is as much the result of centuries of First Nations peoples' labour as it is the result of climate of any other exogenous variable (Lewis and Ferguson 1988). Instead, the ad is conspicuously content articulating the boreal forest as a carbon reservoir and, implicitly, as a wilderness space consistent with much Canadian nature iconography. This double articulation is central to my argument about the racializing quality of forest carbon management discourse in Canada because in both narratives—boreal forest *as carbon reservoir* and *as wilderness*—any a priori human presence in the forest is assumed away. Here, the imperial racism of *terra nullius* is re-enacted at the very moment the space in question is reordered through a discourse of climate change, carbon and the corresponding taxonomy of exchange value.

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode.*

This pattern of erasure built into the ontological production of natural space (Braun 2002) has been repeated elsewhere in policy and legal arguments concerning the use of the Kyoto Protocol in safeguarding boreal forest "wilderness" space in Canada from industrial use (cf Forest Ethics 2006; Scott 2000; Sierra Club of Canada 2003). Therefore, I want to suggest that erasure represents a prevalent mode of racialization at work in boreal forest carbon management discourse. This representation, which I will refer to as carbon nullius, authorizes political and economic access to boreal forest carbon by unilaterally isolating carbon from its political and biohistorical contexts and, in turn, maps it onto the logics of ecologically modern capital and rule. Further, it could be argued that erasure here works as a tactic of primitive accumulation, or what David Harvey has called accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2003) for the question of land ownership is simply bypassed in the enumeration of carbon nullius. This is not to argue that those groups who placed the ad are silent on the question of land or carbon ownership rights. The Wildlands League, for instance, clearly supports the idea that forest carbon values "could be shared and available for economic benefit by First Nations as part of the emerging carbon trading market in Ontario" (2007:1), a position which suggests that carbon ownership rights may lie with First Nations. It is, however, to argue that the *discourse* of carbon nullius renders the political question of land and carbon ownership of absolutely no consequence to the actual act of valuing forest carbon. The Canadian Boreal Initiative's valuation of boreal forest carbon at $3.7 trillion, for instance, does not factor outstanding aboriginal peoples' land claims into its calculus. It simply estimates the volume of forest carbon in the boreal forest and assigns it a value based on the going market rate for one tonne of carbon.[11] To the extent the politics of land tenure are negated from carbon nullius, I want to suggest that the doctrine of carbon nullius is instrumental in the valorization of forest carbon, and that this should alert us to the possibility that processes of carbon valorization, racialization and dispossession are here not just coincident processes but constitutive features of the *same* process. That is to say, on the one hand, aboriginal peoples and others occupying the boreal forest are erased such that their claims to the space in question are rendered of no consequence *to the representation* of carbon nullius. Indeed, the very meaning of carbon nullius trades on erasure. Value, in this representational sense, is created through the erasure of that which is perceived to have no value. On the other hand, carbon nullius maps effortlessly onto the image of wilderness space, the apparently neutral plane upon which so much of Canada's official geographic imagination has been forged. This is extremely important for understanding the production of racialized value, because, while wilderness makes no explicit reference to its whiteness, it nevertheless remains one of the privileged spatial tropes in the construction of "white" settler mythology

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode*.

in Canada (Mackey 2002; Mawani 2007; Shields 1991), and is, thus, central to the territorialization of "white" identity in Canada. Further, this suggests that to the extent carbon nullius and the cultural value of wilderness space overlap, there is scope for thinking about how some vague or unspecified "white" subjectivity lies behind the discourse of carbon nullius.

The power of carbon nullius as a means of producing racialized value is further reinforced by the moral imperative that works through much climate change discourse. Here, when framed as a moral project, carbon nullius embodies two implicit assumptions that require very careful consideration. The first is that the boreal forest is a self-functioning ecosystem whose moral value is entirely self-evident. Efforts to protect the boreal forest are, thus, easily construed as *moral* acts. However, the second assumption, very closely related to the first, is that the placing of aboriginal peoples on small land reserves over a century ago was *also* a moral act, since the boreal forest would have looked markedly different had its inhabitants been permitted to manage this space as they had done for millennia.[12] In other words, under conditions of aboriginal labour, the boreal forest would not have the same "natural" appearance, nor could it be said to be *entirely* self-functioning. I want to suggest that we approach these assumptions with extreme caution. First of all, they provide justification to the reserve system on ecological grounds. And second, they point to the conclusion that contemporary efforts to protect the boreal forest must ensure, at least to some degree, the control of aboriginal peoples' spatial movements and political agency as they pertain to the boreal forest. Both of these points bear a disturbing resemblance to the doctrine of *terra nullius*, one of the founding principles of colonial conquest.

This brings me to the second mode of racialization that works through boreal forest carbon discourse: the idea of racial rule. To explore this idea, I turn to a different empirical text. This second text is a policy document called *Aboriginal Issues in Canada's Boreal Forest* (Morse et al 2005), and it was submitted to the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE) Boreal Task Force in 2005. The NRTEE Boreal Forest Task Force was mandated in 2003 to formulate recommendations to the Canadian federal government on fiscal and regulatory measures for enhancing the conservation of Canada's boreal forest. These recommendations were formally rendered in late 2005 (NRTEE 2005). But for reasons that lie well beyond the scope of this article, these recommendations were never implemented, which, I admit, makes *Aboriginal Issues* a rather obscure document from which to draw my argument. However, *Aboriginal Issues* makes an important substantive contribution to the policy dialogue on boreal forest conservation because it is here that a very clear juridical-political case is made for inscribing aboriginal peoples into the boreal forest

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode.*

conservation narrative. It also includes a number of commendable policy recommendations that address the political and economic concerns of aboriginal peoples, including the full participation of aboriginal peoples and communities in all boreal forest land-use decisions that affect aboriginal treaty and land claim rights.

Aboriginal Issues does, however, periodically invoke an idealized representation of aboriginal peoples, one that constructs aboriginal agency in terms of culture and as congruous with nature and tradition. The document opens, for instance, with the claim that:

> Aboriginal peoples have been practitioners of what is now referred to as "sustainable development" for hundreds of years. Traditional practices of hunting, trapping and gathering activities have imparted Aboriginal peoples with expansive knowledge of the level of human extraction and intervention tolerable by natural ecosystems (Morse et al 2005:5).

Later in the text, it is remarked that, "given the importance of land to their culture and identity, Aboriginal peoples are seen to have a natural interest in promoting responsible resource use and extraction" (2005:7). This representation of naturalized aboriginality features prominently throughout the remainder of the text, and finds clear expression in a section on the Kyoto Protocol and aboriginal peoples. Here, in this section of the text, a case is made for the Canadian and provincial governments to factor the cost of forest carbon into all new and pending land-use decisions in the boreal forest in order to ensure that northern economic development adequately reflects the boreal forest's climate change mitigating value. Doing so, it is furthermore argued, could generate a host of additional benefits, among them increased revenues for the provinces and northern municipalities, including aboriginal communities, through the sale of carbon, and sustainable forest management and forest conservation, including wildlife, tourism and aboriginal traditional land-use values. For my purposes, I want to isolate the last of these—the idea that traditional aboriginal land use is consistent with forest carbon management—and suggest that this notion effectively racializes aboriginality by ascribing to it a set of imagined, universal characteristics. Such characteristics include an assumed predilection for hunting, fishing, trapping and cultural attachment consistent with but not in excess of nature's presupposed limits. It also reproduces aboriginality as an abstract universal thus negating the deep diversity that characterizes the lived experience of aboriginality.[13]

Taken all together, I'd like to suggest that these two representations—the newspaper ad and the policy document—are broadly illustrative of an incipient boreal forest carbon discourse in Canada. One erases First Nations peoples. The other seeks to accommodate the pre-supposed

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode*.

political, juridical and cultural lives of aboriginal peoples in Canada, at least those circumscribed by boreal forest discourse, to the imperative of forest carbon management and, in turn, the exigencies of global climate mitigation and global capital. The first image, the ad, provides a justification for boreal forest conservation through a moral naturalism common to much Western environmentalism. It says that wilderness has inherent value, which alone should sufficiently justify its preservation. But it also says that if the inherent value of wilderness is *insufficient* justification for boreal preservation, than surely the climate change mitigating capacity of the boreal forest extends these claims beyond question. After all, planetary life and human survival depend on it. As I have already noted, however, this set of assumptions grossly forecloses the important ways that aboriginal peoples' political and historical geographies mark these spaces (Chapeskie 2001; Lewis and Ferguson 1988) and, thus, disrupt such universalizing claims.

The second representation, the policy document, seeks to recuperate aboriginal peoples into the frame of boreal conservation, although this time through a naturalist logic. This latter representation says that the "traditional" culture of aboriginal peoples (here the text presupposes aboriginal culture as a bounded, homogenous entity), one sustained through naturalized activities such as hunting, fishing and trapping, is consistent with the principles of forest carbon management, and is therefore desirable both from an environmental point of view, since these practices are inherently bound to an idealized form of land stewardship, *and* from an aboriginal point of view, since aboriginal political voice is so often codified in conservation narratives in terms of cultural survival and the need to preserve traditional life ways.

Forest Carbon Management, Racial Rule and the Racialization of Carbon Value

I wish to contend that working through theses images is a hierarchy of racial difference at the top of which sits an idealized wilderness synonymous with both the Canadian north and nationhood refracted through and constituted by categories of race, class and gender (Grace 2002; Hulan 2002; Mawani 2007). A full genealogy of "Canadian wilderness" and its classed, raced and gendered expressions, lies well beyond the scope of this article. But suffice to say the idea of wilderness travels Canada, past and present, freighted with all manner of racialized cargo not easily severed from the white symbolic order within which it moves (Mackey 2002; Sandilands 1999). Wilderness, in short, offers an important site in the multiple performances of whiteness in Canada.[14] Similar arguments have been made with respect to the genealogies of wilderness in the United States (Braun 2003; Cosgrove 1995; Cronon 1996; Kosek 2004). Occupying a secondary, but no less fundamental,

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode.*

position within this racial hierarchy is an idealized aboriginal subject whose juridical-political ambitions, or so the argument goes, are restricted to securing a set of legal and political conditions believed to guarantee "traditional" (read: natural) aboriginal life ways. Such an idealized subject makes no appearance in the newspaper advertisement. But it nevertheless remains tethered to much forest carbon management discourse as at least partly evidenced in *Aboriginal Issues*. Indeed, such an idealized legal personality occupies an important place in the ordering logic of boreal forest carbon management discourse insofar as it is thought to maintain the natural characteristics of the boreal forest. What I mean by this is that this idealized legal personality is, thus, prefigured as a critical, even indispensable *agent* in fixing boreal forest carbon at the very moment it, too, is spatially and temporally fixed. No longer are aboriginal peoples merely the constitutive absence of wilderness, its absent presence. Rather, through this bit of discursive fiat their presence in the forest is a virtual requirement; the forest needs their careful stewardship.

The power relations that constitute this racial hierarchy resemble a form of "racial rule", one that David Theo Goldberg (2002) has termed racial historicism. For Goldberg, racial historicism names a form of state (or imperial) dominance in which the presumed inferiority of racialized others is guaranteed not by genetic predisposition but by developmental immaturity. Goldberg cites British imperial humanitarianism as an example of racial historicism given its emphasis on the temporal logics of assimilation and conversion. Accordingly, Goldberg argues that white imperialists presupposed that they themselves were the sole agents of history, who devised, in turn, a series of humanizing strategies for nurturing agency and self-rule among the colonized. Indeed, in the Canadian context this was exactly the intent behind the policy of assimilation. Educating aboriginal peoples to become more like white settlers was regarded as a form of training in personal agency, since aboriginality was defined precisely by its imagined lack.

I'd like to suggest that the incipient discourse of boreal forest carbon management in Canada reiterates a variation on Goldberg's racial historicism in two ways. First, although the logic of assimilation is dropped from the carbon management discourse, traces of its improvement teleology remain. What I mean by this is that historically assimilation was practiced as the eradication of difference. In Canada, the state authority went to great lengths to "whiten" aboriginal peoples, to purge them of their indigeneity, as evidenced by the residential school system and, more broadly, the doctrine of liberal humanitarianism, whose commitments to universal humanity and equality authorized the civilizing mission on compassionate grounds (Harris 2002).[15] The logic here was that all "races", even native peoples, were capable of achieving their humanity if properly cultivated.

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode*.

Aboriginal Issues, however, reverses the direction of this improvement logic. Instead of seeking to improve the colonized through the inculcation of "civility" and European values, as in Goldberg's formulation, *Aboriginal Issues* reorients the colonizer–colonized relation in such a way that the colonizer now seeks to improve the colonized by enabling or facilitating his/her reoccupation of the now virtuous position of "primitive tradition". Racial rule in this inverted historicist formulation is, thus, no longer about forcibly purifying aboriginal bodies of their primitivism. Rather, it is about purging them of their modernity. Indeed, by claiming that aboriginal traditional land use is a potential benefit of forest carbon management, consistent with the aims of forest conservation and climate change mitigation, the discourse effectively articulates *legitimate* aboriginality in precisely those terms. In this sense, aboriginality-as-tradition and conservation ideology can thus be regarded as entirely complementary and mutually legitimating and reinforcing discourses. Whereas modernized aboriginality becomes framed as yet another negative "externality" produced by modern capitalism, along with pollution and extinction, this modified variation on racial rule almost seeks to "internalize" this "externality" by recuperating a purified, authentic aboriginality in nature's valorization.

There is a second way boreal forest carbon discourse reiterates historicist racial rule. This can be found in the way each of the representations above codify the epochal shift from modernity to ecological modernity as the result of "white" agency. Indeed, each of the representations above imply that it is precisely *not* the political agencies of First Nations peoples that have affected this shift. This is conveyed most starkly in the first representation where the political geographies of aboriginal peoples are negated; aboriginal presence is simply erased. But the predominance of white agency in the shift to ecological modernity is equally, although less visibly, apparent in the second representation. Here, the political agencies and life worlds of aboriginal peoples are constituted as historically insignificant in the development of forest carbon management and conservation policy. This is not to say that both representations frame aboriginal peoples as insignificant agents in *implementing* either policy. On the contrary, *Aboriginal Issues* makes the largely implicit claim that colonized aboriginal subjects must be re-trained in a form of economic agency consistent with the broader exigencies of an ecologically modern future. This is made very clear in the first of the documents' numerous recommendations where it is argued that:

> governments should help promote labour-intensive, non-timber forest product industries that will provide employment to the Boreal's Aboriginal residents, such as: harvesting, processing and commercial distribution of wild rice, fish, fruit and country food; sustainable

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode*.

> tourism (guide/outfitting, hunting/fishing lodges); or jobs associated with protected areas (management, guiding) (Morse et al 2005:87).

In this sense, the document is very clear about what its authors see as the tremendously important role aboriginal peoples must play in securing boreal forest carbon. The point I want to emphasize, however, is that the epochal shift towards an ecologically modern future has been effected through a specific form of white agency *and* that through devices like *Aboriginal Issues*, aboriginal peoples are being narrowly inscribed into this ecological narrative. Here, other modes of aboriginal politics and avenues for resistance are simply disavowed.

This last point is especially important for understanding how racial historicism works in forest carbon management discourse. Indeed, for Goldberg, historicist racial rule is precisely about making *relevant* those bodies imagined to be historically *irrelevant*. It is about cultivating *their* historical agency in a manner consistent with the imperial project. It is, in Goldberg's words, about effecting the "readmission of those deemed not white into a history" (Goldberg 2002:97) to which I would add "white" history. We can read a similar process at work in the boreal forest carbon narrative. Here, racialized aboriginal subjects are transfigured into historical agents and invited to participate in a white political geography demarcated along ecological lines. In saying this, however, I do not mean to imply that aboriginal peoples *actually* lack agency or history. Nor do I want to imply that the collective fate of aboriginal peoples is somehow predetermined by a "white", totalizing environmental discourse. I simply want to point out that an inverted form of racial historicism is embedded, often implicitly, in the overlapping discourses of boreal forest conservation and carbon valuation.

This approach to accommodating the political and cultural aims of aboriginal peoples to the goals of forest conservation through the policy of carbon valuation maps onto a much broader conservation agenda in which it has been argued that "Amerindians need economic alternatives—*congruent with their cultural norms*—that they can control. Conservation and development projects with Amerindian communities, therefore, must be designed around normative indigenous values" (Schwartzman and Zimmerman 2005). I absolutely concur with this agenda on the grounds that colonization is an ongoing phenomenon and that economic alternatives, including livelihood strategies, that meaningfully privilege indigenous self-determination are critically important to decolonization. Indeed, this agenda is especially significant at this particular juncture given recent tense relations between indigenous peoples and conservation groups worldwide over consolidation of the global conservation agenda (and its capital) by World Wildlife Fund, The Nature Conservancy and Conservation International (Chapin 2004).

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode*.

I do, however, wish to articulate two reservations I have with this agenda. One concerns the broad question over exactly who or what defines and articulates *legitimate* normative indigenous values. In light of postcolonial critique, is it even possible for such values to be articulated at all given the colonial legacy refracted through the very notion of indigeneity? Does not the very possibility of normative indigenous values presuppose some uniformity to indigenous epistemology and ontology? If so, what sorts of historical–geographical contexts make possible, constrain or liberate the articulation of indigenous values? In what ways do relations of power—colonial, racial, class, gender, national, ethnic—shape the way in which indigenous values are articulated at the intersection of debates about forest carbon management, climate change and forest conservation? In posing these questions, I need to be very clear that I am not at all trying to undermine the *possibility* of indigeneity as a mode of political subjectivity. Nor am I trying to use the rationalism of antiessentialist critique against those who might invoke their indigeneity to gain moral authority in their political struggles. Doing so would be to commit the error of "liberal racism" identified by Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield over a decade ago (Gordon and Newfield 1994). Instead, I wish to complicate the "smoothness" by which indigenous geographies are folded into forest carbon management discourse in Canada and elsewhere.

My second reservation has to do with another form of power: money power. Indeed, the rhetoric of an indigenous-conservation rapprochement contains tremendous internal coherence—a win–win logic by the standards of ecological modernization. Yet, the actual material relations that mediate aboriginal peoples, global capital and conservation groups, are embedded within a global political economy characterized by vast financial and political asymmetries. In Canada it is admittedly premature to make any normative judgements about the distributive effects of forest carbon management, since so few forest carbon projects have been undertaken, none to my knowledge involving direct transfers from carbon buyers to aboriginal carbon sellers. Indeed, it may well be that such a payment regime will result in tremendous socio-economic benefits for aboriginal beneficiaries. And I remain entirely welcoming of this possibility, while at the same time conscious that such a possibility carries significant downsides mainly in the forms of economic and political liability. It is not, however, premature to ask whether and how finance capital (whether in the form of philanthropy, direct transfers, or through carbon brokerages or carbon offset providers) is exploiting a contradiction central to Canadian political culture—the tenuous relation between conservationism, the state and aboriginal peoples—in order to gain access not only to emissions offsetting potential of boreal forest carbon, but to the *ownership* rights of such carbon. In this sense, could the win–win logic of an incipient

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode.*

ecologically modern forest carbon management regime be just a rather sophisticated form of primitive accumulation? Moreover, as a discursive strategy, does this form of ecological accumulation require a logic of racial historicism in order to function, or indeed, to gain credibility?

I cannot answer these questions here because forest carbon management in Canada is still very much a political rhetoric more so than it is a set of specific material practices. Nevertheless, I think the evidence and argumentation I present above, speculative though it is, offers at least some early indication that a form of racial rule is in play here and that scholars interested in the politics of accumulation, the reproductions of class power, antiracism, denaturalization and the commodification of carbon ought to pay close critical attention to this burgeoning political terrain. As global insurance and finance capital become increasingly attuned to the financial implications of climate change, we would do well to remain mindful of how these and other forms of capital adjust their accumulation strategies accordingly and how ongoing patterns of dispossession and racial domination might be construed as not merely incidental but central to such strategies.

Conclusion

In this article I have been arguing that at stake in debates about boreal forest conservation and carbon management are not simply concerns over green production, or energy geopolitics. Also at stake in these debates are very serious questions about identity, race and the national form. In particular, my claim is that the commodification of boreal forest carbon (although an incomplete and uneven phenomenon) comes to rely on the racialization of aboriginal peoples through the doctrine of carbon nullius. I have also argued that erasure is not the exclusive mode by which aboriginal peoples are racialized through the discourse of boreal forest conservation. So, too, an inverted form of racial historicism plays an important part in organizing forest carbon conservation discourse. This, I argue, should alert us to the possibility that boreal forest conservation discourse is governed as much, albeit implicitly, by a logic of racial rule as it is a moral conviction to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Let me now conclude by revisiting a question I raised earlier in this article: to what extent can we say that the preservation of racial difference is central to the exercise of *ecologically* modern power, discourse and rule? As a preliminary response to this question, let me first say that I think it would be a mistake to assume that ecologically modern power, discourse, and rule are elements of a universal phenomenon. In much the same way neoliberalism is best thought of as an uneven, and often contradictory, process that manifests differently from one site to the next (Larner 2003), so, too, it seems imperative that ecological modernization

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode*.

be conceptualized as geographically variable. And if this is the case, then to the extent it is an important feature of neoliberal environmentalism, racialization should also be understood as equally contingent. Indeed, as Stuart Hall argued almost three decades ago, structures of racial domination are conditioned by their specific historical settings (Hall 1980). What all of this means is that if we are to understand racialization as a process tethered to the commodification of carbon (which I believe it is), then we should recognize the spatial variability of carbon commodification, not as some abstract phenomenon, but as a series of territorially located phenomena, refracted through national ideology and its attendant forms of epistemic violence.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Andrew Chapeski, Simon Dalby, Andrew Kent, Audrey Kobayashi, Sherene Razack, Peggy Smith and those who participated in the 2007 AAG session entitled Critical Explorations in Nationalism and the Environment, where this article was first presented. I especially wish to thank two anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful and incisive commentaries on earlier drafts of this article. Mistakes and errors are, of course, entirely my own. Robust conversations with various activists were also invaluable. The writing of this article was made possible by a SSHRC postdoctoral fellowship, the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Carleton University, and the Department of Geography at Queen's University, Kingston.

Endnotes

[1] As I note further on in this article, forest carbon management, in particular the policy of "reduced emissions from deforestation", also known as avoided deforestation, was among the central elements negotiated at the recent United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties in Bali, Indonesia in December 2007.

[2] I consider the current enthusiasm for forests at the level of international environmental policy to be a *renewed* enthusiasm. I say this because from at least the mid-1990s forests and international forest management policy passed through a long period of negligible international importance (see, for instance, Humpreys 2006). This is evidenced by the relative lack of interest on the part of policymakers and nongovernmental organizations for the United Nations Forum on Forests, the main UN body established to address international issues relating to forests and forest management.

[3] Those states that form the Coalition for Rainforest Nations include Bangladesh, Bolivia, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Chile, Congo, Colombia, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Fiji, Gabon, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Uruguay, Uganda and Vanuatu.

[4] According to the Canadian Boreal Initiative, Canada's boreal forest contains between 7 and 11% of the world's terrestrial biospheric carbon.

[5] The Canadian Boreal Initiative (CBI) is coalition of corporations, environmental organizations and First Nations organizations working collaboratively to ensure that 50% of Canada's boreal forest remains protected from development and that the remaining 50% is developed to the highest social and environmental standard. Members of the Boreal Leadership Council, the CBI's governing body, are Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc., Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Dehcho First Nations, Domini

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode.*

Social Investments LLC, Domtar Inc., Ducks Unlimited Canada, The Ethical Funds Company, Forest Ethics, Innu Nation, Kaska Nation, Pembina Institute, The Nature Conservancy, Nexen Inc., Poplar River First Nation, Suncor Energy Inc., Tembec Inc., Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta, and World Wildlife Fund (Canada).

[6] For more on ecological modernization theory and practice, see Hajer (1996), Christoff (1996), Mol and Sonnenfeld (2000). For more on ecological modernization and geography, see Harvey (1996) as well as *Geoforum* volume 31, issue 1, which was dedicated to ecological modernization.

[7] These groups are the Boreal Songbird Initiative, ForestEthics, Greenpeace, Markets Initiative, Natural Resources Defence Council, Ontario Nature, Sierra Legal, and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society/Wildlands League.

[8] The woodland caribou is among the most popular non-human species in contemporary boreal forest eco-politics as numerous conservation groups prioritize the protection of caribou habitat. A similar image of the caribou also adorns the standard issue Canadian 25 cent piece.

[9] During one conversation I had with a wilderness activist about this ad, the activist pointed out that the ad made *implicit* reference to the presence of First Nations peoples in the area concerned. McGuinty's promise stated very clearly that, if elected, his Liberal government would involve aboriginal peoples in comprehensive land-use planning of the area in question. Aboriginal people's involvement in land-use planning is something these groups have been advocating for several years. This is especially important to bear in mind because while the ad makes no reference to the aboriginal peoples living in the area in question, more and more Canadian conservation groups acknowledge the importance of working with aboriginal peoples to advance conservation.

[10] The ad does not specify the area in question. It simply refers to Ontario's boreal forest. Thus, the number of aboriginal communities in the area in question depends on exactly what area is being referred to. The lower figure refers to the number of communities located in an area approximately north of 51° latitude. The higher figure refers to the number of communities in the boreal forest, which straddles 51°. These community counts and population estimates were based on 2006 Census of Canada data.

[11] The report makes very clear that the methodology used in this calculation was based on Munich Re's estimated total costs to the global insurance industry that result from climate change, assuming global emissions continue to rise.

[12] I owe this insight to Bruce Braun.

[13] I note that this is not the only way aboriginality is racialized in this document. There are other overlapping and contradictory representations that construct aboriginality in various other ways, for instance in terms of labour and employment. This suggests to me that in boreal forest conservation discourse the racialization of aboriginality is refracted not simply through the category nature, but also through class and gender. I admit that the process of racialization is never as smooth as my analysis implies and that an intersectional reading of racialization in *Aboriginal Issues* would have resulted in a much different analysis than appears here. This should not, however, detract from the argument I am making here. Instead, it points to further areas of inquiry relevant to the process of carbon commodification, racializations and the production of surplus value under conditions of neoliberal environmentalism.

[14] It bears mentioning that the performance of whiteness *qua* wilderness is non-essentialist, meaning that there is no singular, timeless performance of whiteness through wilderness in Canada. Such performances can only ever be contingent and multiple. It follows that whatever racisms might be enacted through the performance of wilderness is equally multiple and contingent.

[15] For excellent treatment of the way aboriginal children actively resisted colonization through the residential school system, see Sarah De Leeuw (2007).

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode*.

References

Bachram H (2004) Climate fraud and carbon colonialism: The new trade in greenhouse gases. *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 15:5–20

Barron J (2000) In the name of solidarity: The politics of representation and articulation in support of the Labrador Innu. *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 11:87–112

Bhatti J S, Kooten G C v, Apps M J, Laird L D, Campbell I D, Campbell C, Turetsky M R, Yu Z and Banfield E (2003) Carbon balance and climate change in boreal forests. In P J Burton, C Messier, D W Smith and W L Adamowicz (eds) *Towards Sustainable Management of the Boreal Forest* (pp 799–855). Ottawa: National Research Council Press

Braun B (2002) *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Braun B (2003) On the raggedy edge of risk: Articulations of race and nature. In D Moore, J Kosek and A Pandian (eds) *Race, Nature and the Politics of Difference* (pp 175–203). New York: Duke University Press

Bumpus A and Liverman D (2008) Accumulation by decarbonisation and the governance of carbon offsets. *Economic Geography* 84(2):127–155

Campbell K M, Gulledge J, McNeill J R, Podesta J, Ogden P, Fueth L, Woolsey R J, Lennon A T J, Smith J, Weitz R and Mix D (2007) The age of consequences: The foreign policy and national security implications of global climate change. Washington DC: Center for a New American Security, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Canadian Boreal Initiative (2005) The boreal in the balance: Securing the future of Canada's boreal region: A status report. Ottawa: Canadian Boreal Initiative

Chapeskie A (2001) Northern homelands, northern frontier: Linking culture and economic security in contemporary livelihoods in boreal and cold temperate forest communities in northern Canada. In I Davidson-Hunt, L C Duchesne and J C Zasada (eds), *Forest Communities in the Third Millennium: Linking Research, Business, and Policy Toward a Sustainable Non-timber Forest Product Sector* (pp 31–44). St Paul: United States Department of Argiculture, Forest Service

Chapin M (2004) A challenge to conservationists. *WorldWatch Magazine* 17–31

Christoff P (1996) Ecological modernisation, ecological modernities. *Environmental Politics* 5:476–500

Cosgrove D (1995) Habitable Earth: Wilderness, empire and race in America. In D Rothenberg (ed) *Wild Ideas* (pp 24–41). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Cronon W (1996) The trouble with wilderness: Or, getting back to the wrong nature. In W Cronon (ed), *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (pp 69–90). London: W W Norton

De Leeuw S (2007) Intimate colonialisms: The material and experienced places of British Columbia's residential schools. *The Canadian Geographer* 51:339–59

Demeritt D (1998) Science, social constructivism and nature. In B Braun and N Castree (eds) *Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millennium* (pp 173–93). London: Routledge

Desfor G and Keil R (2004) *Nature and the City: Making Environmental Policy in Toronto and Los Angeles*. Tuscon: University of Arizona Press

Escobar A (1996) Constructing nature: Elements for a poststructural political ecology. In R Peet and M Watts (eds) *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development and Social Movements* (pp 46–68), London: Routledge

Forest Ethics (2006) Robbing the carbon bank: Global warming and Ontario's boreal forest. San Francisco and Toronto: Forest Ethics

Goldberg D T (2002) Racial rule. In D T Goldberg and A Quayson (eds) *Relocating Postcolonialism: A Critical Reader* (pp 82–102). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers

Gordon A and Newfield C (1994) White philosophy. *Critical Inquiry* 20:737–57

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode.*

Grace S E (2002) *Canada and the Idea of North*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press
Griffiths T (2007) Seeing "red"? Avoided deforestation and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities. Moreton-in-Marsh: Forest Peoples Programme
Hajer M (1996) Ecological modernization as cultural politics. In S Lash, B Szerszynski and B Wynne (eds) *Risk, Environment and Modernity: Towards a New Ecology* (pp 246–268). London: Sage
Hall S (1980) Race, articulation and societies structured in dominance. In *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism* (pp 305–345). Paris: UNESCO
Harris C R (2002) *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance and Reserves in British Columbia*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press
Harvey D (1996) *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. Oxford: Blackwell
Harvey D (2003) *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
Heynen N, McCarthy J, Prudham S and Robbins P (eds) (2007) *Neoliberal Environments: False Promises, Unnatural Consequences*. New York: Routledge
Hulan R (2002) *Northern Experience and the Myths of Canadian Culture*. Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press
Humpreys D (2006) *Logjam: Deforestation and the Crisis of Global Governance*. London: Earthscan
Kosek J (2004) Purity and pollution: Racial degradation and environmental anxieties. In R Peet and M Watts (eds) *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development and Social Movements* (pp 125–54). London: Routledge
Larner W (2003) Neoliberalism? *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 21:509–12
Lewis H T and Ferguson T A (1988) Yards, corridors, and mosaics: How to burn a boreal forest. *Human Ecology* 16:57–77
Lohman L (2006) *Carbon Trading: A Critical Conversation on Climate Change, Privatization and Power*. Uppsala: The Dag Hammarskjöld Centre
Luke T (2003) On the political economy of Clayoquot Sound: The uneasy transition from extraction to attractive models of development. In W Magnusson and K Shaw (eds) *A Political Space: Reading the Global Through Clayoquot Sound* (pp 91–112). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
Mackey E (2002) *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press
Mawani R (2007) Legalities of nature: Law, empire and wilderness landscapes in Canada. *Social Identities* 13:715–34
McCarthy J and Prudham S (2004) Neoliberal nature and the nature of neoliberalism. *Geoforum* 35:275–83
McClintock A (1995) *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge
Mol A P and Sonnenfeld D A (eds) (2000) *Ecological Modernisation Around the World: Perspectives and Critical Debates*. London: Frank Cass Publishers
Moore D, Kosek J and Pandian A (eds) (2003) *Race, Nature and the Politics of Difference*. New York: Duke University Press
Morse B, Benidickson J, Elgie S, Flewelling R, Mallet M and Loon K (2005) *Aboriginal Issues in Canada's Boreal Forest*. Ottawa: National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy
Munro M (2008) Canada's boreal forest the Fort Knox of carbon. Canwest News Service, 6 January 2008
NRTEE (2005) Boreal futures: Governance, conservation and development in Canada's boreal. Ottawa: National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy
O'Connor M (ed) (1994) *Is Capitalism Sustainable? Political Economy and the Politics of Ecology*. London: The Guilford Press

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode*.

Robbins P (forthcoming) Carbon colonies: From local use value to global exchange in 21st century postcolonial forestry. In S Raju, S Kumar and S Corbridge (eds) *Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies of India*. Thousand Oaks: Sage

Said E (1994) *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books

Sandilands C (1999) Domestic politics: Multiculturalism, wilderness and the desire for Canada. *Space and Culture* 4:169–86

Schwartzman S and Zimmerman B (2005) Conservation alliance with indigenous peoples of the Amazon. *Conservation Biology* 19:721–7

Scott D N (2000) Carbon sinks and the preservation of old-growth forests under the Kyoto Protocol. *Journal of Environmental Law and Practice* 10:105–45

Shields R (1991) *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*. London: Routledge

Sierra Club of Canada (2003) Forests, climate change and carbon reservoirs: Opportunities for forest conservation. Ottawa: Sierra Club of Canada

Stanislaw J A (2007) Climate change and energy: The future is now. Deloitte.

Stern N (2006) *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change*. London: HM Treasury.

UNFCCC (2007) Reduced emissions from deforestation in developing countries: Approaches to stimulate action. In *Thirteenth Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, B*, Indonesia document: FCCC/SBSTA/2007/L.23/Add.1/Rev.1

Wildlands League (2007) Province urged to protect carbon stores in intact forests. Press release

© 2009 The Author
Journal compilation © 2009 Editorial Board of *Antipode.*